

Lamborn Family VINEYARDS

QUALITY GRAPES AND TASTES FROM
THE SOILS OF HOWELL MOUNTAIN

◆ BY CHARLEEN EARLEY



Unlike so many wine producers in Napa Valley today Mike Lamborn, his wife Terry and his father, the late Bob Lamborn never dreamed of being in the wine business or owning a vineyard. Coincidence, timing and good luck created what would eventually become Lamborn Family Vineyards with deep roots in the special soils of Howell Mountain in the heart of Napa Valley.

Bob Lamborn was a private investigator, but as his son Mike would find out in 2004 at his father's memorial service in St. Helena, his father was much more than that. "Unbeknownst to me, he also worked with the FBI and CIA, shocker!" said Lamborn. "He was also the lead PI hired by Patty Hearst's mother after her abduction by the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). My father was born in British Columbia, but from early on, he grew-up in Berkeley. In 1969, an old Berkeley buddy invited my father to come visit him at his weekend property on Howell Mountain."

That's where and when history took root for the Lamborn family, because it's when Bob came home that afternoon he had purchased a one-acre parcel from his pal Dave. Dave went up the road and bought 20 acres, which Bob eventually bought from Dave. From there Dave went up the road again and bought 40 acres. "See a pattern here?" said Lamborn. "The 20-acre parcel had remnants of a vineyard planted by Italian immigrants in the late 1800s, primarily Zinfandel."

"My father, in his typical fashion, watered, pruned and fertilized these vines, which hadn't been tended since the beginning of prohibition,"

Lamborn added. "Most of them revived and went on to produce fruit, which prompted my father to do some research. He discovered that wines from Howell Mountain had won medals in France in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These would have been Zinfandel wines."

With 20 acres of prime grape growing land, Bob decided he'd become a farmer. And, in 1973, convinced his son Mike with wife Terry and their baby (the couple was in their twenties) to purchase a parcel of land across from Bob's 20 acres. "Somehow we agreed to borrow the money and buy the parcel," said Lamborn. "Having a full time corporate job, only weekends and holidays allowed us to slowly develop this 'wild' piece of land."

"I am 72 and have been working our property since the day we bought it in 1973," added Lamborn. "Our sons Matt (45) and Brian (43) literally grew-up on the property and have been actively engaged in our small family business for many years now. Matt (his wife Lori) and Brian (his wife Adi) have six children between them, ranging from 11 years to 17 years, all of whom participate in harvest and crush and often skip school to do so. Lamborn Family Wine Company is a Limited Partnership of Terry, myself and the boys."

Their wines are sold in fine dining establishments and select wine shops throughout California, and in the U.S., but primarily through their wine club and web site (www.Lamborn.com). The Lamborn Family Wine Company produces estate grapes for four wines, Zinfandel Rosé, Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon and a new Red Blend, which they are releasing March, 2019, called '2200.' "It's named for the vineyards' altitude," said Lamborn. "This new wine is all estate fruit and a blend of Cabernet and Zinfandel. Our total annual production of all wines is around 2,000 cases."

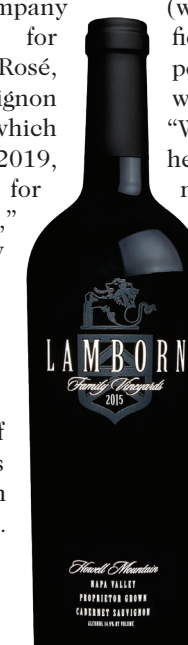
Curtis Cribbs of Huntington Beach, CA, is a huge fan of the Lamborn Family Vineyard wines.

"I love earthy cabs and their Cabernet is always a big wine; their Zinfandel is very good also," said Cribbs. "The Cabernet is my favorite with the Zinfandel about a length behind. I like their wine with tri-tip, prime rib, baby back ribs, pasta with marinara sauce and it's even good with a nice burger. I have poured their wine for friends who hadn't tried it before and every one of them have raved about the wine. Most of them now order their wine."

Lamborn believes there are four main reasons why their wines are popular. First they receive regular recognition because of Heidi Barrett (famous for Screaming Eagle), she has made their wines since 1997. Second is the Howell Mountain AVA, which Bob was instrumental in establishing in 1983, and was also the first sub-appellation in Napa. Third is the quality of their wines year in and year out. Last but not least, is their authenticity.

"We have no layers of employees – you need or want something – a Lamborn will provide it!" said Lamborn.

Lamborn said their business philosophy is simple. "We grow the very best grapes we are capable of (we are organic, but not certified) so that Heidi has the best possible raw materials from which to work" said Lamborn. "With Heidi at the winemaking helm (and, by the way, we have nothing to do with winemaking), we taste the wine for the first time at bottling. Wine quality is never an issue. We provide our customers with the best value we can, both in product and service."



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